

## [Walter R. Morrison]

1

Gauthier, Sheldon F.

Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist. 7

Page #1

FEC [6?]

Walter R. Morrison, 78, 110 1/2 E. 2nd. St., Ft. Worth, Tex., was born May 7, 1859, in [Mineola?], Wood Co., Tex. Walter's father operated a sawmill and owned several saddle horses. Walter was taught to ride as soon as he was able to sit on a horse. He was a good horsemen by 14, and assisted in a cattle drive from E. Texas to the John Collins ranch in Parker Co., Tex., where he was employed as a cowhand. His story:

"My age is 78, and I was born at [Mineole?], in [Good?] County, Texas, on the seventh day of May, 1859. My father owned a sawmill in [Mineole?] and kept several saddle hosses, so when one of the family wanted to drag off some place, they usedaa hoss. They forced me to keep out of the way around the sawmill because there was nothing a young kid could do, so I spent a lot of time riding while I was not in school.

"Father put me straddle a hoss when I was not old enough to sit up so when I was old enough to be trusted off alone, I was able to handle a hoss. The thing that I hankered for as a kid, was to be a cowhand. Father bought me a lariat for my Christmas present when I was 10 years old. I began to swing the loop over everything I could find with that loop.

## Library of Congress

Still objects at first, then moving objects. When I was 14 years old, I could smear moving objects going and coming.

“John Collins hands were driving a herd of cattle out of East Texas when I was 14 years old. They secured a larger herd than John calculate on and needed some extra help. I fretted my father until he allowed that I could join the outfit for the drive. I reckoned that I would just [mak?] the drive to Collin's ranch in Parker County and then return but I made such a good hand that when the drive was over, John Collins said, 'Kid, if you want to join this outfit, I can use you'. C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 I jumped at the chance and stayed there four years.

“Collins only ran around 6,000 head on his Parker County range and employed 10 waddies besides his sons, Tom and Bob. His large ranch was in Board County, where there were 35 waddies with the outfit. The Parker County outfit was located 20 miles West of Fort Worth, and on the Parker and Tarrant County lines.

I reckoned I was a top rider when I first joined the outfit but I soon learned that I had something to learn about keeping my saddle warm. I was calculating a hoss by those father had in his stable, and reckoned pitching according to the rearing and sheering our horses pulled when they felt pert. About the second day at the 'JC' outfit, 'JC' was the Collins brand, his son Tom, a little older then I, said to me, 'Have you rode any pitching hosses?' Of course, I thought I had. I swelled up like a pigeon and told him that I had rode every hoss that father had brought on our place.

“He says, 'Then I don't have to pick a gentle for you to ride?'

“Shucks no', I answered, 'I am no greener on a hoss'. I had been there two days and spent a week on the drive, and reckoned that I was a rawhide.

“The next day, Tom pointed out a yellor hoss and said, 'Use that critter today. I'll help you put the tree on him. He is a trifle skittish with strangers and may skip a little but is a good

## Library of Congress

saddle'. We put the tree on him. I mounted and hit the tree, then 3 I went into space for a spell. When I hit, it was the earth I hit.

"Tom was standing there, giving me the laugh. 'I thought you could ride!', he shot at me.

"I can but I was caught off my guard', I said. 'I can ride that critter.'

"I reckon you were because that hoss just makes a couple skips to get the kinks out of his fins, then is off. All the hands like to ride him', he said, without a smile.

"I'll ride him now. I know what to expect', I, tells him. I mounted that critter again with my conk set to stay with the animal. It pronto showed me something about pitching I didn't know. That hoss was a pig pen builder, meaning that it had no regular way to go but operated according to notions, and they were changeable. Well, I grabbed leather pronto but that did me no good. I had a death grip on the nub and at the first elevation, my hands were the only part of me that was touching leather and when I come down, the hoss was not there to catch me. I passed it on the way to the ground, still with a grip on the nub but I was traveling so fast the speed broke the hold. I flattened out like a saddle blanket.

"The bull of the [?] ranch was standing by me as I pulled myself together. He was John Collins and he said, 'Kid, you have given the boys enough opera for this time. Don't try that critter again for a spell'. I was given another critter and went to work. I did some practicing on skipping hosses, as Tom called them. I soon caught the knack and before the month was over, I rode the yeller hoss. 4 "We had no man belly cheater on the 'JC'. Mrs. Collins did the cooking with the help of colored house man. The 'JC' was what the waddies classed as ['A?'] one hoss outfit'. If we worked away for a day or so, we carried the chuck on a pack hoss, and that was called 'A grease pot outfit'. We then did our own cooking, which was nothing to brag about. We would cook coffee, broil steak over a camp fire, cook beans, and bake biscuits. Sinkers is a good name for the biscuits.

## Library of Congress

“Three of us waddies had to night ride. We would spell each other every night. Three of us would ride the fore part of the night, and three the latter part. All hands would be on the ride when a bad storm or a Norther hit.

“There was only one night during the four years I was with the 'JC' outfit that we had the critters get away. The critters on that range were not as wild and skittish as some. As a rule, a small herd is not so prone to stomp. This night was late in the Spring, and the storm hit about midnight. I was riding the fore-part of the night and I knew that a buster was on the way a couple of hours before it hit. My hoss had sensed it, and was quivering. The cattle had raised and were milling. They had sensed the coming buster and wanted to get some place for a shelter.

“I rode into the ranch and raised all the hands. We all began to circle the critters and sing. That is, them that could sing did, and the others tried. It did not sound like grand opera but it drew the critter's attention and held them at first. All the choir in the state of Texas could not hold them critters when the storm hit. Fact is, the thunder, rain, and wind, made such 5 noise that it [di ned?] out everything else. Of course, it was the atmosphere that was our biggest trouble. It looked like a black cat except when sky-fire turned on a flush, and that was a-plenty. Those critters would break and run. At first, we could turn the animals but they would break anew, and each time would be more stubborn.

“That country is rolling and full of brush in spots, which makes night riding hard, especially in a storm. We hit the hills, hollows, and brush at top speed that night, trying to turn those critters and got the herd to milling. We could hear the cattle because of the stomping of their feet and bumping of their horns but could not see where they were except when the sky fire would flash some light. Then we could see the herd, also see the fire play hop-skip-jump, on the tips of the critter's horns. It was my first time to see such no that, and it had me plumb loco.

## Library of Congress

"A waddy in called upon to do his best riding at times like that. Such a shape up is why 'tis said that, 'A cowhand was a man with sand in his gizzard and a hoss'. When daylight came on and we could take a reckoning of the mess, we found that 1,000 critters were scattered over the country and one waddy was gone. Hub Jones was missing. His [ho?] was at the pen, minus it's rider.

"We all hit the drag to hunt the strays and two of us set out to find Hub. They found him, five miles away and dragging for camp on hoof with a broken collar bone. We said that his conk quit working and did not know what happened. When his conk came back to normal, he was laying in a clump of briars. [e?] were a week getting the strays back. 6 "My next experience which had my gizzard grinding was one where Mrs. John Collins showed up as a women with sand equal to a he-man. Bob Collins and I were on the range looking for some strays when suddenly, we saw about 35 mounted Indians making for us. We headed our hosses towards the ranch pronto, and they kept coming. They never got close enough to brand either of us. It was a pretty close race for about five miles with the Indians throwing a few shots at us. They were all short except one that stung my hoss on the flank, causing him to turn on more steam.

"The Indians knew that all the hands [we e?] off the ranch and at different points on the range. I reckon that they had given the place an eyeing because they followed us to the shed, then stayed off at a distance. They begansto circle the shed and first one, then the other would dash in and pour lead at the shed. A few had rifles and could place lead in the shed and stay out of range of our six-guns.

Mrs. Collins was in the house. The house was built of stone and had ports at different spots around the house. John always kept several rifles in the house, and it was not long until that artillery was in action. The first shots hit the mark and two red skins hit the ground. With the third shot, she winged one and the fourth shot put him in the class of

## Library of Congress

good Indians. By that time, the rest pulled out of range, stopping about 300 yards from the house and going into conference.

"We two boys broke for the house and got hold of a rifle. We then waited for the skunks. We did not have [l ng?] to wait. They circled to the front of the house, and then slowly worked into the 7 building. Bob and I wanted to shoot as soon as they came into range but Mrs. Collins would not have any of it. She said, 'You boys harken to me or I'll box your ears. Those skunks are intending to storm the house, break the door down, and overpower us. We will wait until they are close so we can't miss a shot. I'll give the order when to shoot. Bob, you take the first one, Walt, you take the next, and I'll take the furtherest. We will keep shouting that way and will not waste any shots.' The Indians kept coming up and finally, she said, Shoot!"

"We cut loose and three fell. They then rushed and three more fell before they could reach the porch, and three more fell at the porch. Then they turned and ran for their hosses. They high-tailed it across the range.

"[?] cowhand came through, looking for McLean's strays. He heard the shooting and saw at a glance what it was. He dragged it for Fort Worth pronto, and reported the fight to Captian King. At the head of a number of rangers, King came out and with a number of cowhands, took after the red skins. did not go with the trailers because Mrs. Collins insisted that I and her sons stay to help clear up the mess. We dragged the Indians off to a sink hole and threw them in. Walt McLean told us that they got a few at the [est?] Fork of the Trinity River.

"I understand that the old Collin's stone house still stands. it was standing in 1910. I made a trip at that time through that section and stopped at the old house to look through the port that I did my shooting at them Indians.

"I quit the Collins outfit in [18 7], and joined the Foredice 8 outfit. They were located six miles South of [?] springs, where the present town of Big Springs gets their water supply.

## Library of Congress

[t?] the time the outfit had their quarters there, the spring had a 10 inch flow of water. The Foredice outfit brand was the picture of four dice. The outfit ran [aro nd?] 15,000 head. The reason I went there was because my wages were "30.00 a month, which was 5.0 more than Collins paid me.

"It was six months after I joined the outfit that I met up with my Indian friends again. One day, there were about 20 of us waddies cutting out calves for branding. Dick Thompson was the cock-a-doodle-do, and he ordered me to the ranch quarters with a note to the ram rod. I had dragged two miles when [?] spied 14 red skins about the time they spied me. They took after me pronto, and I turned back to where the waddies were. [s?] it happened, there was a patch of brush between the waddies and me. I traveled around the edge of the brush, keeping just out of the shooting range. I was on Nigger Baby, one of the best hosses a man ever straddled so I was not bothering my conk about them catching me. I was after coaxing them Indians back to where the waddies were. Well, I did that. They follered me around that brush and into that bunch of waddies before they got wised up to the shape up.

"After they finished having their fun, the waddies thanked me for the good time I provided. When them waddies turned loose and surrounded the red skins, it was not lung until there were 14 good Indians.

The best rider I have ever seen, worked on the Foredice outfit. That was Dick Thompson. Time and again, I have watched 9 that man bust a wild critter and never bother about putting a bridle or a saddle on the critter. He would throw a loop on a wild critter in the herd, and then leave his mount holding a taut line. Dick would go down that line 'til he reachead the critter, grab it by the mane, release the loop, then, by holding onto the mane, swing on the critter's back. There he would stay until the critter had pitched it'self down, and then ride the hoss into the ranch pen.

## Library of Congress

"The best hoss I ever rode was Nigger Baby. The one I spoke of a moment ago. I named him Nigger baby because he was so black. He was a wild cuss and it took me eight months to get him working good, but when he was shaped up, he was a great saddle. I never did get him to keep from pitching once in awhile. He seemed to take pleasure out of pitching and did it for fun but never did so while I was in a pocket. It was always when we were ambling along. He would suddenly elevate a few times, shake his head, switch his tail, and then settle down to business.

"That animal finally got to where he would come to me as far as he could hear me call. The hoss would raise his head, listen for a second, then come a-running. The closer he got, the better he seemed to like it. When he got so close, he would neigh. He learned to know the cow work as a man and could work alone. He was the most knowing and willing hoss I ever rode. He would catch on to what was wanted in just one or two tries. When it comes to running, he was fast and could run all day.

"[?] was pert as a hoss buster and a little cocky about it. Foredice had a blue hoss. That is, they called it blue. He injured one man and killed another. I calculated that I could ride it and 10 told the big gun I could do it. He advised against it but I went to wrangle the beast. That critter had all the tricks in pitching all rolled into one, was fast as lightning, and a fighter to boot. I got a loop on him, saddled and mounted him. He put me into a spill and before I could get out of his way, he made for me. He was standing on his hind legs and cutting own at me with his fore feet when the big gun, who was standing by, hollered, 'Lead that animal! Lead that beast!' I did not need to be told to use my gun. I was fixing to lead him and gave him a 45 ball betwixt the eyes to save myself.

"After I quit the Foredice outfit, I dragged over to the 'JST' outfit, [I cated?] in Taylor County. The outfit was owned by J.S. Taylor, and his brand was made like this, . I run into another hoss on the 'JST' that come next to Nigger Baby. He was a yellor stallion with a brown strip down his back, a brown mane and tail. A pretty fellow but wild and smart. He was so smart that he had beat the loop. There was a counterpart of him on the range that



## Library of Congress

had sent a Tex' to the Eternal Range while the fellow was trying to bust him. The bug gun had let the two houses alone, wanting to save them for breeding purposes.

"One day, I was looking for a hoss to bust and a herd was found in a clump of bushes located in a sharp bend of the creek. The hosses were at the further part of the bend where the bank was sheer. There was only one way for those critters to get away, and that was for them to pass me unless they made a 20 foot jump down that bank. The yeller critter was in that bunch and I said to myself, 'Your my meat'. 11 "The critters made a break to pass by me. [s?] they did, I smeared the yeller baby. He was traveling fast and when he hit the end of the rope, my mount was well set and that yeller lad hit the ground hard. He stayed down long enough for me to put my bandana over his eyes for a blind. I also snubbed the hoss. When he got to his feet, I put the tree on him and turned him loose.

"There was an hour of steady pitching. He was pitched down at the end of that time and I rode him into the pen. The big gun came to look at the hoss and thought it was the one with a notch in it's tail. He insisted that I leave the hoss alone, saying, 'That hoss has killed one man and you'll be the next if you don't leave it alone'. I went against his request and made one of the best workers on the outfit.

"Red Smith was with the 'JST' at the time I was there. I calculate that men to be the best shot I ever saw draw a gun. I have seen him hit a running rabbit at 90 yards with a 38 pistol, and if he ever missed, no one seen him do it. He plugged an Indian at 150 yards with a 38 gun. I had plumb missed the shot.

"A bunch of Indians had stole 15 head of cattle from the 'JST', and we trailed them to a creek where we saw them on the other bank, I fired and missed, Red threw down on them and made a good Indian out of one, then and there. The boys went on and got the cattle and some of the other Indians.

## Library of Congress

"I dragged over to the 'BFL' outfit in [?] Pinto County from the 'JST'. It was a hoss outfit and owned by Red Collins when I joined. They changed it over to cows the year I was there. I met up with several gangs of rustlers during my stay on the [?]. 12 [?]

Three rustlers were naturalized about 300 yards above where the Fort Worth Water Works is now located on the Clear Fork of the Trinity. They were caught with a bunch of BFL critters. That happened in 1876, or 77. The sheriff came and cut them down.

"A woman, I forget her name, that was a widow, and lived 15 miles South of Fort Worth, lost some critters to rustlers. [?] party of cowhands took up the trail for her. The rustlers split up into three bunches East of Fort Worth, and we did the same. Three of the bunch were caught up with on the line of Denton and [arrant?] Counties. When them rustlers left there, they were traveling feet first. The sheriff found one of the three with a steer's tail sticking out of his mouth.

"I stayed with the 'BFL' outfit for a year, then dragged back to the Fordice outfit. I don't want to leave the idea that we cowhands did not have some fun along with the tough times. We spent most of our time on the Fordice outfit practicing shooting, roping, riding, and having contests that were friendly, but for blood. Sometimes, the contests would be betwixt the hands of different outfits. The old '101' outfit was near the Fordice ranch and often, a contest would be held betwixt the hands of the two outfits.

"Deer were plentiful and we would contest in roping the animals to see who could bring in one alive. [t?] that, I always came out loser. The deer would always break it's neck on me. They had to be handled properly to keep the critter from jumping in the air and coming down on their [he d?], which would bust their kneck every time. It required skillful manipulation of the rope to prevent 13 the act. There were a good number of the boys that could bring in the deer alive.

## Library of Congress

"The worst mess I ever got into while roping wild animals was rolling a buffalo bull. I had to cut the [?] to get away from him. That animal did not jump into the air but at me and the hoss, and I am here to say that animal was full of fight. I have seen waddies bring in wild cats and all manner of animals that they had roped but no two year buffaloes.

"My game was riding. Dick Thompson was the best man on a hoss I ever saw. I was equal to him except on bare back. I could do anything in a saddle that he could do but could not do the bare back stuff. Booger Red was on the '101' ranch at the time I was on the Foredice. He was a top rider but the loop was his main stunt. That man could loop any leg of a running critter from any position. He could just make a rope talk.

A bunch of us cow hands took part in an organized rodeo in 1896. I reckon it was about the first of such. There were Bob Taylor, son of John, Bob Cater, Booger Red, and myself that were the top of the outfit. He started at Seymour. I took the riding from Booger in the contest there. Bob Carter took it from me here in Fort Worth. Booger got the championship back in Corsicana. Booger always took the contest in roping. He did not make a lot of jack but had lots of fun. We were earnest in our efforts and put the pressure on each other.

"I went to Arkansas after that rodeo trip and went into the cattle buying business there. That put an end to my range career.